



Billing Code: 3510-22-P

DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration

RIN 0648-XE580

Marine Mammals; File No. 19116

AGENCY: National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS), National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), Commerce.

ACTION: Notice; receipt of application.

SUMMARY: Notice is hereby given that the NOAA Office of Science and Technology (Ned Cyr, Responsible Party), 1315 East-West Highway, Silver Spring, MD 20910, has applied in due form for a permit to conduct research on sixteen species of marine mammals in the Pacific Ocean.

DATES: Written, telefaxed, or e-mail comments must be received on or before [insert date 30 days after date of publication in the **FEDERAL REGISTER**].

ADDRESSES: The application is available for review by selecting “Records Open for Public Comment” from the “Features” box on the Applications and Permits for Protected Species (APPS) home page, <https://apps.nmfs.noaa.gov>, and then selecting File No. 19116 from the list of available applications.

These documents are also available upon written request or by appointment in the Permits and Conservation Division, Office of Protected Resources, NMFS, 1315 East-West Highway, Room 13705, Silver Spring, MD 20910; phone (301) 427-8401; fax (301) 713-0376.

Written comments on this application should be submitted to the Chief, Permits and Conservation Division, at the address listed above. Comments may also be submitted by

facsimile to (301) 713-0376, or by email to *NMFS.Pr1Comments@noaa.gov*. Please include the File No. in the subject line of the email comment.

Those individuals requesting a public hearing should submit a written request to the Chief, Permits and Conservation Division at the address listed above. The request should set forth the specific reasons why a hearing on this application would be appropriate.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Sara Young or Carrie Hubbard, (301) 427-8401.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: The subject permit is requested under the authority of the Marine Mammal Protection Act of 1972, as amended (MMPA; 16 U.S.C. 1361 *et seq.*), the regulations governing the taking and importing of marine mammals (50 CFR part 216), the Endangered Species Act of 1973, as amended (ESA; 16 U.S.C. 1531 *et seq.*), and the regulations governing the taking, importing, and exporting of endangered and threatened species (50 CFR 222-226).

The applicant requests a five-year permit to conduct a research program involving studies of sound production, diving and other behavior, and responses to sound of marine mammals, including endangered species. The results would be integrated with related studies and directly contribute to conservation management for sound producers and regulatory agencies by identifying characteristics of target species that are critical for passive monitoring, detection, and/or density estimation; and, by demonstrating how specific sounds, including simulated military sonar, may evoke behavioral responses in marine mammals. The experimental design involves temporarily attaching individual recording tags to measure vocalization, behavior, and physiological parameters as well as sound exposure. Behavior will be measured before, during, and after carefully controlled exposures of sound in conventional playback experiments. Tagged

subjects will be exposed to received sound levels up to 180 dB re: 1μPa. This study will involve various activities that could take animals by harassment, including close approaches, attachment of tags, and sound exposure. Small fragments of sloughed skin, which often remain attached to retrieved tags, would be used for genetic analyses. Target species include beaked whales and other odontocetes, key baleen whales, and pinniped species for whom such data have not been previously obtained; other marine species may be incidentally impacted. Please refer to the tables in the application for the numbers of marine mammals, by species and stock, proposed for this permit. The research will be focused in the waters within the U.S. Navy's Southern California Range Complex, and primarily near the vicinity of San Clemente Island northward to Monterey Bay.

NMFS prepared a draft environmental assessment (EA) under the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969 (42 U.S.C. 4321 *et seq.*), to examine whether significant environmental impacts could result from issuance of the proposed scientific research permit and conduct of the research. The draft EA is available upon request for review and comment simultaneous with the scientific research permit application.

Concurrent with the publication of this notice in the **Federal Register**, NMFS is forwarding copies of the application to the Marine Mammal Commission and its Committee of Scientific Advisors.

Dated: May 10, 2016.

Julia Harrison, Chief, Permits, Conservation and Education Division, Office of Protected Resources, National Marine Fisheries Service.
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